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THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTION IN RELIGION

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I

It is held by many that religion had its origin in the emotional life, in "loving reverence," or in fear, or in awe; and many make some particular emotion the distinguishing mark of religion. Since, indeed, religion is a part of the struggle for the preservation and perfection of life, it involves from the very beginning emotional states. But to speak of religion as originating in emotions is to assume a conception of religion which seems to me utterly unacceptable. If any sentiment or emotion, such as reverence or fear or awe, is found at the dawn of religion, it exists as part of the response, in a particular situation, to a sense of the presence of an invisible Being, upon whom one depends and with whom one desires to hold satisfactory relations. The emotion belongs to an experience involving the whole man, that is, man as a feeling, thinking, willing being.

The first question, then, that I desire to raise is not, "In what emotion does religion originate?" but, "What is the dominant emotion at the beginning of religious life?" Let us first consider the question *a priori*. What are the emotions which even the most primitive savage is likely to have as he feels the invisible presence of his great tribal ancestors, of mighty nature-beings, of creators? Fear these he certainly does. If he believes himself able by magic to coerce any one of them, his attitude towards that one is self-assertion, self-reliance, and pride, perhaps even arrogance, mitigated no doubt by a lurking fear that his magic may fail. But such a relation to a spirit or god does not constitute religion; it is, as we know, magic. If, on the other hand, he finds himself in a personal, anthropopathic relation with one of these unseen beings, and, realizing his need, seeks to win the god's favor with presents or by bowing before him in an attitude of fear, respect, and hope, we have an altogether different emotional attitude. The man is no longer self-assertive and proud.

A sense of subjection is present, together with fear, either as pure fear, or as that higher emotion derived from fear and curiosity—awe. There may be, in addition, something belonging to the opposite end of the emotional gamut,—something approaching the tender emotions. If this should seem to endow primitive man with feelings beyond him, I would answer that we owe to our animal ancestry not only the instincts and emotions of fear, of self-assertiveness and its opposite, but also those simpler forms of the tender emotions which appear in the parental relations of the higher animals and in the attachment of certain of our domestic animals to their masters. Why, then, should we be unwilling to attribute to the most primitive savage a degree of tender regard for his Great Ancestor or for his Creator? The first group of human beings need not be imagined as either bloodthirsty brutes, incapable of anything but violence and cruelty, or abject, timorous creatures, familiar only with fear. The lowest men we know do not at all answer to either description. There is among them kindness, mutual consideration, and even real affection. This is what we should expect of primitive man, if he had inherited the best in his animal ancestry. Shall we add gratitude to the list of original religious emotions? Young children have the reputation of being thankless, and savages show the same trait. Gratitude is not a simple primary emotion, as are fear, self-assertion, self-subjection, and the tender emotions. Nevertheless, I do not see why some degree of gratitude should not, even at the beginning, mix with the other emotions. If the gods are regarded as in some degree benevolent, then one has a right to expect expressions of gratitude towards them when they have fulfilled the desires of their dependants.

The oldest and probably most widely accepted opinion is that fear led to religion. Hume's conclusion, that "the first ideas of religion arose . . . from a concern with regard to the events of life and fears which actuate the human mind," is maintained by most of our contemporaries. Among psychologists, Ribot, for instance, affirms that "the religious sentiment is composed . . . first of all of the emotion of fear in its different degrees, from profound terror to vague uneasiness, due to faith in an unknown, mysterious, impalpable Power."¹ The sway of fear at the dawn

¹ Th. Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 309.

of human existence is a well-established fact. It is probable that evil spirits were the first to receive particular attention. "Among the Bongos of central Africa 'good spirits are quite unrecognized, and, according to the general negro idea, no benefit can ever come from a spirit.'"² In other tribes good spirits are known, but the savage always "pays more attention to deprecating the wrath of the evil than securing the favor of the good beings." The tendency is to let the good spirits alone, because they will do us good of themselves.

But though fear is the most conspicuous emotion of primitive religious life, it is not the only one present, and there is no quality in fear that fits it to be called the original religious emotion.³ The making of religion requires nothing found in fear that is not present also in the other emotions. If tender emotions are not prominent at the dawn of religion, it is only because fear is the first of the well-organized emotional reactions, and biologically at first the most valuable. It antedates the human species and today appears first in the infant as well as in the young animal. In early human existence it was kept in the foreground by the circumstances of existence. No doubt before the protective fear-reaction could be established, the lust of life had begun to express itself in aggressive habits,—for instance, the habit of securing food. But these desires did not, as early as in the case of fear, give rise to any emotional reaction as constant, definite, and poignant as fear. The place of fear in primitive religion is, then, due not to its intrinsic qualities, but simply to the circumstances which made it appear first as a well-organized emotion, vitally

² Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock), *The Origin of Civilization*, 5th ed., 1892, p. 225.

³ R. R. Marett, in an essay entitled "Pre-Animistic Religion," gives expression to an interesting view of the original religious emotion. "Before, or at any rate apart from, Animism, was any man subject to any experience, whether in the form of feeling, or of thought, or of both combined, that might be termed specifically 'religious'?" His answer is affirmative; the emotion arising in the presence of the mysterious—awe—is the original religious emotion. "Of all English words, Awe is, I think, the one that expresses the fundamental religious feeling most nearly. Awe is not the same thing as 'pure funk.' 'Primus in orbe deos fecit timor' is only true if we admit Wonder, Admiration, Interest, Respect, even Love, perhaps, to be, no less than Fear, essential constituents of this elemental mood" (*The Threshold of Religion*, 1909, pp. 8, 13).

connected with the maintenance of life. It is for exactly the same reason that the dominant emotion in the relations of uncivilized men and of animals toward strangers is usually fear.

Nevertheless there does not seem to be anything preposterous in the supposition that groups of primitive men found themselves in circumstances so favorable to peace and safety that fear did not occupy the foremost place. Neither wild men nor wild animals need have found themselves so situated as to be in a constant state of fright. If the African antelope runs for its life twice a day on an average, as Galton supposes, the wild horse on the South American plains, before the hunter had appeared in his pastures, ran chiefly for pleasure. Travellers bear testimony to the absence of fear in birds and animals inhabiting certain regions. But, it may be asked, would religion have come into existence under these peaceful conditions? A life of ease, comfort, and security is not conducive to the establishment of practical relations with gods. History teaches us that in times of prosperity men forget their gods. Why should happy, self-sufficient men look to unseen, mysterious beings for assistance? Under such circumstances the unmixed type of fear-religion would never have come into existence. Religion would have appeared late, and, from the first, in a nobler form. It would have been characterized by a feeling of dependence upon Creators and All-fathers regarded as benevolent gods, and would have elicited primarily awe and reverence.

W. Robertson Smith denies that the attempt to appease evil beings is the foundation of religion. "From the earliest times religion, as distinct from magic or sorcery, addresses itself to kindred and friendly beings, who may indeed be angry with their people for a time, but are always placable except to the enemies of their worshippers or to renegade members of the community. It is not with a vague fear of unknown powers, but with a loving reverence for known gods who are knit to their worshippers by strong bonds of kinship, that religion, in the only sense of the word, begins."⁴ He does not deny that certain practices intended to avert the action of evil spirits preceded the establishment of

⁴ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 55.

affectionate relations with benevolent powers, but declares that the attempt to propitiate dreaded evil spirits is not religion.

Can this limitation of the meaning of religion be accepted? When a person seeks to conciliate an evil being, his feelings and his behavior are undoubtedly very different from his experience when he communes with a benevolent being. Yet in both cases an anthropopathic relation with a personal being is established. In this respect both stand opposed to magical behavior. This common anthropopathic element is so fundamental that it seems advisable to give both types of relation the name religion. But since they differ in important respects, the term "negative religion" may be used for man's anthropopathic dealings with essentially bad spirits, and "positive religion" for his relations with benevolent gods.

But not even positive religion is at first free from fear. The benevolent gods are quick to anger, and cruelly avenge their broken laws. This is one more reason for not completely dissociating the propitiation of evil spirits from the worship of kindly gods.

II

Origins are interesting chiefly because of the light they shed upon the present and the future. In order to give that light its fullest illuminating power, the beginnings should be connected with the present by a knowledge of the intervening developments.

One of the most significant facts revealed by a comparison between the earlier and later forms of religion is an emotional progress. It begins with the yielding of fear to its relative, awe, which in its turn is displaced by other emotions in which fear is not merely held in control, as in awe, but is completely overcome. They are reverence, admiration, gratitude, a sense of the sublime, and the tender emotions. In the highest civilization of today, fear, awe, and, to a considerable degree, even reverence have been displaced by the tender emotions, which rule supreme. Fear expresses itself in rejecting or breaking away from its object; the tender emotion, in embracing or accepting its object. The progress of the dominant emotional tone from fear to the tender emotions, passing through awe, reverence, and sublimity, means,

then, the gradual substitution of acceptance, agreement, and union for rejection, disagreement, and separation. The importance of this fact will appear in what follows.

The advance from a negative to a positive reaction is, of course, not the *result* of religion. To take it so would be to put the cart before the horse. Religion is the instrument, not the creator, of human impulses and desires. Whatever the development through which it passes, that which takes place is no more than the manifestation in one realm of life—the religious—of what takes place in life generally. The obviousness of the transformation I have indicated makes a long demonstration unnecessary. A few illustrative facts may, however, be in place. Neither Christ nor Gautama, nor even Mohammed, was actuated by fear. They were, of all men, fearless. But they were in advance of their times. After their death their religions, founded upon a plane far above the lives of their contemporaries, were degraded to the level of the period,—a level so low that even in the Christian era fear is found entrenched as the predominant religious force. For those acquainted with history, the mention of the Dark Ages, when cruelty and dread sounded the leading notes in the tumultuous dramas in which the church of Rome frequently played a chief part, will be a sufficient reminder of the potency of fear in those times. After the great Protestant schism, fear remained for another long period the preponderant emotion in the life of most Christian bodies. Predestination, together with the belief in hell, was made an instrument of terror. Nowhere was the dread awfulness of God more seriously realized than among the Jansenists of Port Royal. The brothers Antoine Lemaistre and Isaac Lemaistre de Saci, and Pascal, three of their great leaders, were brought to God chiefly through fear.⁵ What Fontaine says of de Saci, in the *Mémoires* quoted by Sainte-Beuve, could perhaps have been asserted with equal truth of all the noble men who directed the movement. “Those who have said after his death that the fear of the Lord had filled him, have made a true portrait of him.” “The chaste fear of God and respect for His infinite grandeur so possessed him that he was in

⁵ Sainte-Beuve, Port Royal, vol. i, pp. 378–380, 33; vol. ii, pp. 328, 502 ff. Comp. Histoire de M. M. Alacoque, 10th ed., pp. 124–125.

His presence as in a continual tremor of fear." The great movement started by John Wesley was also fed by fear, as is sufficiently attested by the terrifying eloquence of its most distinguished disciples. Even the society that took the peaceful name of "Friends" was not at the beginning free from fear.

The change that has come over the Christian world with regard to fear is reflected in the altered emotional tone of religious revivals. In all revivals earlier than the present generation one of the chief instruments was fear,—fear of God's wrath, fear of wretchedness in this life, fear of torments hereafter. It was common for people "under conviction of sin" to be so frightened that they would "throw themselves on the ground and roar with anguish." The terrifying method was carried so far that a few ministers made an effort to soften the preaching. Jonathan Edwards, however, thought that "speaking terror to them that are already under great terrors, instead of comforting them" is to be commended if done with the intention of bringing more light. He complains of the weakness of those who shrink from throwing children into ecstasies of fear with talk of hell-fire and eternal damnation. "But if those who complain so loudly of this," he remarks, "really believe what is the general profession of the country, viz., that all are by nature the children of wrath and heirs of hell; and that every one that has not been born again, whether he be young or old, is exposed, every moment, to eternal destruction, under the wrath of Almighty God; I say, if they really believe this, then such a complaint and cry as this betrays a great deal of weakness and inconsideration. As innocent as children seem to be to us, yet, if they are out of Christ, they are not so in God's sight, but are young vipers and are infinitely more hateful than vipers and are in a most miserable condition, as well as grown persons."⁶ This appeal to fear of a hun-

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* (1832), p. 203. The terrifying nature of Edwards's sermons is indicated by such titles as *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. In the last is found the following famous passage: "The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as we hold a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath toward you burns like fire. He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight. You are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most

dred years ago is rare today. The evangelist Moody⁷ had little to say about hell and the wrath of God, and a great deal about heaven and the love of Christ. In the latest of great revivals, the Welsh revival, the meetings were pitched in the key of the tender emotions. "The burden of Evan Roberts's teaching is love and gratitude, obedience and personal service and joy."⁸ The practices of the Salvation Army show that even in the lower strata of society fear has fallen into disuse as a religious tool. If this is true of the uneducated part of our population, it is even more marked among the educated. Christ is best known to our prosperous church-goers as a compassionate Son of Man, healing the sick and comforting the wayward. The hissing of threats and maledictions has given place to the singing of the Son's redeeming love and of the delights of beulah-land.

One must, however, make two qualifications to this statement. At all times the spirit of Christ has here and there been repre-

hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. . . . There is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into Hell since you arose this morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to Hell since you sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful, wicked manner of attending to his solemn worship."

Finney was of Edwards's mind. "Without pity or abatement he appealed to the selfish emotion of fear. He held that whoever comforts the sinner does him an injury 'as cruel as the grave, as cruel as hell,' for it is calculated to send him headlong to the abyss of everlasting fire" (F. M. Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 193).

"Impassioned appeals to terror were uncommon with Wesley" (*ibid.*, p. 167), yet he believed in everlasting torment for the wicked, and at times made fearful pictures of what awaited unrepentant sinners. If Wesley did not go so far as Edwards in "preaching terror," some of his followers did. "No community ever saw more terrible scenes of mental and nervous disorder than are described in the *Journal* as having occurred under the preaching of one Berridge and one Hicks in the vicinity of Everton, almost under the shadow of the University of Cambridge" (*ibid.*, p. 171).

⁷ "With Moody, religious evangelism was emancipation from the horrid spectres of irrational fear. I do not mean that he was blind to the natural law of retribution. . . . There was no thoughtless optimism about his preaching of divine justice. But the old emphasis was completely changed. Moody's favorite theme was the love of the Heavenly Father. He believed that the lash of terror is for slaves and not for the free born of Almighty God" (F. M. Davenport, *op. cit.*, p. 204).

⁸ A. T. Fryer, "Psychological Aspects of the Welsh Revival 1904-5," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. xix, 1905, p. 92.

sented in all its gentleness. There have always been rare men like Francis of Assisi and Fénelon to bear witness to the struggle between the spirit of fear and the spirit of love. Moreover, the cruder attitude is still occasionally met with, chiefly among the less intelligent.

A few years ago I circulated a *questionnaire* on several phases of religion, especially upon its impulses and motives. The three hundred answers received were in many cases supplemented by personal correspondence. Inadequate as these answers are for statistical purposes, they are valuable as "qualitative" information concerning the religious attitude of our contemporaries. They reflect strikingly the new temper. Fear is of so little significance in their religious life that its removal would make practically no difference, except in the case of two of them, an elderly French clergyman and a young law student. The former wrote as follows:

I feel very much that my letter will disappoint you. The feeling of divine justice and of its exigencies has much weakened in pious persons. In me it has continually grown stronger. The principles are neglected and sentimentality is put in their place. Moreover, I have suffered dreadfully, physically and morally; the history of Job is constantly present to my mind. I have seen the evil spirits at work trying to injure me. I have seen Satan displaying his utmost ingenuity to make me suffer the inexpressible. You will therefore readily understand that my usual mood is not one of superficial light-heartedness, that I cannot be an optimist in the common acceptance of the word. I believe that the just man will be saved,—without that certitude there can be but despair and death,—but he is to be saved painfully, as by fire. . . . I am moved to religious practices by a feeling of duty and to appease the wrath of God which rises against sinful humanity. . . . For many people the most characteristic religious experience is the feeling of God's love, of his goodness, compassion, and readiness to succor those who call upon him. I would not say that this is false, but its one-sidedness brings it near to being false. . . . My experience is that man being sinful must suffer, suffer much, drink also of the bitter cup of Jesus Christ. In my religious exercises, I always experience fear towards the Holy God, who must inexorably avenge his broken law and his majesty outraged by sin.⁹

⁹ Reprinted from "The Contents of Religious Consciousness," *Monist*, vol. xi, 1901, pp. 563-564.

The law student (age 23) admits that the circumstances which oftenest affect him religiously are those which frighten him or make him nervous. Fear is with him an emotion easily aroused. Several of his religious practices are kept up chiefly because of a vague fear that harm will befall him if he discontinues. This is true, for instance, of his attendance on Young Men's Christian Association meetings, although he "shrinks" from them. There is "little pleasure and some annoyance in them." He used to read the Bible morning and evening. Lately he has left off the evening chapter because "it wearies him so." "But," he says, "it was a great effort, and I felt the fear for a day or two."

In these two cases of fear-ridden religion—the sole instances that have come to my notice through the *questionnaire*—fear is constitutional. Both men are mild phobiacs, and their natural disposition makes use of obsolete Christian doctrines. The young man knows that he is very nervous and he suspects that his fears are abnormal. "It [the fear] makes me very unhappy even when I am anxious, or at least willing, to do the very thing it prompts me to do. It may be a disease; for I remember that as a mere child it led me into the most absurd habits or tricks. I would feel it my duty to pick up all the loose pieces of glass and china in our home-yard lest some poor barefoot be injured." He knows now, even at the moment the fear is felt, that it is "admittedly groundless, unreasonable, and inconsistent."

In most cases my correspondents have their attention so habitually turned in other directions that, when they write upon the impulses and motives of religious life, they either forget fear or have actually nothing to say about it. When they do mention fear, it is as a rule in general terms; for instance, "fear of danger." A few are more definite. One writes that she would not begin the day without prayer for fear that things in general would go wrong. Another would not dare undertake a railway journey without first securing God's protection. A few mention the fear of death itself, without reference to the beyond, while still others seem not to dread the great crisis so much as the other world.¹⁰

¹⁰ In his study of conversion Starbuck found that in 14 per cent. of his cases fear of death and hell played a considerable part. His were chiefly adolescent conversions. (*The Psychology of Religion*, 1899, p. 52.)

The "fear of God" appears more frequently than any other fear. Some describe it as a "reverential fear" or as a "feeling of dependence." In others it bears a more self-regarding stamp. I find only five who seem to have been disturbed at any time by the thought of the hereafter, and of these five, four declare that they have outgrown that youthful stage.¹¹ In childhood and adolescence it is not unusual for fear to be the principal incentive to religious life. Before reaching the point where we fear sin and remorse extremely but punishment not at all—a height which Harriet Martineau attained at the early age of twenty¹²—there is usually a period during which our religion is prompted by fear of physical suffering and punishment. St. Theresa confesses that it was base fear more than love that prompted her to enter the religious life. Mrs. X., of whom I have written elsewhere,¹³ had "no use" for God in her childhood, except when she was frightened. "I do not think I bothered with God when I was a child, except when frightened. Usually I did not care a button for him. I would say my prayers as directed, but automatically. Only, if I got into a plight, I would cling with the completest faith to what I had been taught about God's power and his readiness to answer our prayers."

In the religious experience of my correspondents, fear plays on the whole an exceedingly insignificant rôle. Our contemporaries have the positive attitude. Their virtues and their defects are those of an aggressive, optimistic, and democratic age. It may be, however, that among other classes not fully represented in my *questionnaire*, for instance, among Roman Catholics, fear is more influential.

¹¹ G. Stanley Hall, in "A Study of Fears," reports that only 11 out of 299 persons who answered his *questionnaire* mention specific fear of hell. (American Journal of Psychology, vol. viii, 1906-7, p. 223.) Scott finds in an inquiry on "Old Age and Death" that 90 per cent. of his correspondents do not mention hell at all. (American Journal of Psychology, vol. viii, 1906-7, p. 104.)

¹² Harriet Martineau, Autobiography, vol. i, p. 31.

¹³ J. H. Leuba, "The Personifying Passion in Youth with Remarks upon the Sex and Gender Problem," Monist, vol. x, 1900, p. 547.

See also Th. Flournoy's "Observations de psychologie religieuse," in Archives de psychologie, vol. ii, 1903, Observation II, p. 331.

Let us turn now from the facts to their interpretation. Three causes for the decline of fear are discernible.

(1) At present in civilized society the occasions for fear have become relatively few. The dangers to which men were formerly exposed have almost ceased to exist. Wild beasts, human enemies, and the horrors of war are for most of us only imaginary experiences. It was not so in New England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Then the conditions of life were favorable for the spread of the harsh Calvinistic beliefs. Conflicts with unsubdued nature and with savage Indians kept the fear-reaction uppermost. The tender emotions could hardly thrive where one went to church with a gun on the shoulder and divided one's attention between worship and the expectation of war-whoops. Speaking of the Edwardian revivals, Davenport says: "I think it may be said that no such effects as are there visible could have been produced, even with the aid of the shocking appeals to terror employed by the preachers of that period, if there had not been in the population a tremendous amount of latent fear."

The causes of fear which have not been removed by civilization,—the celestial bodies, thunder, lightning—have lost much of their terrifying power; for they are now understood and partly mastered. At any rate, eclipses, comets, tornadoes, and electric storms are to us physical phenomena. In a study of fear among children, I find the following: "The director of the school and his assistants, after having considered the question, agreed in saying that they had never discovered in the children the least sign of fear." Another teacher made the same declaration, in words that deserve to be repeated: "I have never noticed fear in my pupils. What should they fear? Their master? We are not in that age. Their school? That is made as pleasant as possible. Their work? They are amused while being taught. Their punishments? They are so light and so infrequent! No, rightly or wrongly, the children of today fear nothing; at least the feeling of fear has no occasion to manifest itself during school-time."¹⁴

¹⁴ A. Binet, "La peur chez les enfants," *Année psychologique*, vol. ii, 1895, pp. 224-225.

(2) The fear-reaction is falling into disuse not only because of a lack of proper stimuli, but also because modern intellectual and moral education produces an increased capacity for converting emotional stimuli into controlled reactions. Reflection and attention are natural enemies of emotional reactions. They engender a habit of self-possession: the more reflective and attentive, the less emotional.

(3) The fundamental cause of the decline of fear is, however, neither knowledge of the physical world nor mental training, but the recognition of the inadequacy of fear as a method of meeting danger. Without entering into a detailed examination of the defects of the hereditary fear-reaction, we may note that it meets each and every danger in the same manner. It is an instinctive tendency to run away from the source of danger, a tendency which, it must be noted, is accompanied by a scattering of the wits. When violent, it brings about a paralysis of the whole voluntary apparatus; it interferes with respiration; it produces spasmodic constriction of the blood-vessels, shiverings, violent spasms of the heart, resulting in pallor and peripheral anaemia. These physiological constituents of the reaction are not altogether without direct or indirect value; for instance, the immobility which they enforce would often be the wisest behavior for the threatened man or animal. Yet this animal fear-reaction is not the only way, nor always the best way, in which an intelligent being, living in highly complex relations, may meet every dangerous situation.

The origin of the fear-reaction accounts for its inadequacy. It arose at a low level of animal life through the natural selection of those chance variations (assisted probably by adaptive habits) which gave an animal an advantage over its fellows. Now the struggle for life does not create improvements; it simply preserves the fittest among the variations blindly produced by nature. The "fittest" is anything, however wretched, which is superior, for the purpose of animal life, to that which previously existed. Natural selection can do no more than preserve the less deficient. The selected improvements have been transmitted to man through generation after generation of animals in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. As a result, man,

with powers of observation and foresight immeasurably superior to those of the animals in which this way of meeting danger was established, still retains the instinct to act in this primitive inadequate fashion. The typical fear-reaction is a survival of a bygone age. "The dominant impression left by such a study" [of fears in children and adolescents], writes Stanley Hall, "is that of the degrading and belittling effects of excessive fears."¹⁵

This insufficiency of the fear-reaction leads civilized man to struggle against its manifestation. Our instinctive legacy for meeting danger is so evidently deficient that a man in peril struggles as frequently against fear as against its object. In other words, that which was meant to be a means of safety is itself looked upon as a source of danger. A most interesting phase of the powerful mind-cure movement is the war it wages against fear. "Fear," says Horace Fletcher, "is to be placed in the category of harmful, unnecessary, and therefore not respectable things."¹⁶ For these people fear is the Great Sin; it is Satan's new name. Physicians are ready to agree with the more moderate of the Christian Scientists in their impeachment of fear. One physician writes: "When all is said that can be said about the uses of fear, we come to the conclusion that on the whole the sense of danger is a nuisance. Fear is out of date, an anachronism, a vestige, a superannuated and silly servant that has seen better days. . . . We cannot begin to know the meaning of freedom in spiritual life until we have done with it. Until men and women learn that there is nothing about which it is worth while to be anxious, until they put fear aside and look forth upon the world with equanimity and confidence, they cannot exercise a free judgment nor exert a free will." "Generally speaking, the capacity for fear in the human mind is absurdly in excess of its utility."¹⁷

¹⁵ G. Stanley Hall, "A Study of Fears," *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. viii, p. 238.

¹⁶ Horace Fletcher, "Happiness as found in Fore-thought minus Fear-thought," *Menticulture*, Series II.

¹⁷ George R. Wilson, "The Sense of Danger and the Fear of Death," *Monist*, vol. xiii, 1903, pp. 367, 366.

Civilized man, however, does not strive to be rid of the awareness of danger. What he wants is to be independent of the single, blind, inherited way of meeting every emergency, and to remain in possession of his intellectual and muscular powers, so as to use them judiciously. The goal towards which we are moving is a fearless alertness to physical and moral dangers.

It may seem to some that we have uselessly complicated a simple problem. They might say that, if the influence of fear in religion is waning, it is because we have ceased to believe in terrifying doctrines. When the belief in the judgment, hell, the devil, and an angry God gives way, fear is dethroned. This account would be satisfactory, if the discredit into which these doctrines have fallen were not itself the outcome of the progressive changes I have mentioned as truly as it is the product of the activity of reason exercised directly upon religious ideas. If we no longer believe in hell, it is as much because, being tuned to another key, we are not easily frightened, as because we have come to admit the insufficiency of the proofs for the existence of hell. In the two cases cited above, in which fear held its old sway, the beliefs were supported by a temperament in accord with them. Without this temperamental disposition, they would probably not have believed in the torments of hell. In the early days of New England the conditions of life kept fear in the foreground, hence its dominance in religion. Love agrees better with the contemporary popular temper, and so our judgment is biassed in favor of the doctrines which exhibit the love of God. In regard to these doctrines we are as easily satisfied intellectually as others used to be regarding the fearful doctrines.

The decline of fear in religion is to be ascribed primarily neither to religious influences nor to critical doctrinal studies. Its more profound causes are, as I have said, increased knowledge of the physical universe, intellectual and moral training, and, above all, the realization of the defects of the fear-inheritance. The nature of these causes indicates that the lessening of fear observed in the Christian religion must take place in the religions of all progressive peoples, despite their theologies and creeds. As human nature changes, so do gods and religions change. The effort to readjust our primitive instincts and impulses to the

present altered circumstances is what is meant by the expression "the struggle of the spiritual against the natural man."

Fear gradually yields the place of dominance to awe.¹⁸ In the ancient Greek mysteries, in the old Druidic rites celebrated amid the sombre majesty of forests, in the elaborate ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church, as well as in the plainer forms of worship where simplicity and silence take the place of ornamentation and music, awe constitutes an essential part of the whole emotional impression. Judged by the efforts made to affect the worshippers with awe, this emotional reaction must possess a high religious value. Of what use, then, is awe in religion? One of the services that awe and a sense of the sublime render to religion is to bestow upon it a dignity which fear cannot give. Fear is not an experience of which we may be proud; it is a narrowly utilitarian and unintelligent reaction. In so far as it expresses essential selfishness, it can only discredit religion in the eyes of those who have awakened to the nobility of disinterestedness.

Awe and the sense of the sublime differ from fear in that they do not openly refer to personal needs, neither do they blatantly announce weakness and incapacity. They have no apparently selfish purpose; they have, indeed, no obvious purpose at all. The shudder that creeps over one at the sight of the leaping waters of a cataract is neither selfish nor altruistic; it is disinterested. It is true, however, that the awe-producing aspects of nature all have lurking about them the threat of potential danger.

The value of awe to religion is not only its disinterestedness, —which is a purely negative virtue,—it has a direct ennobling effect. To be impressed by the great, the powerful, the mysterious, and still to be unafraid, is to evince one's partial kinship with these forces. Fear reveals antagonism, enmity, isolation; awe, involving as it does the recognition of greatness without actual fear, gives the first sense of a not unfriendly relation with the cosmos. To feel the power of a thing and at the same time to admire it, as we do in awe, is not only to begin to understand,

¹⁸ See on awe, W. McDougall, *Social Psychology*, pp. 129-132; on the sublime, Th. Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, pp. 270, 348-350.

but also to be attracted. The sympathetic vibrations of awe are the first organic sign of a friendship with the cosmic forces, the first step towards that ultimate union with the Great Whole achieved in certain forms of practical mysticism. The thrills of awe are thus enlarging, vitalizing, ennobling.

It should be observed further that there is but a single easy step from awe and sublimity to admiration and reverence. Now in passing from fear through awe to admiration and reverence man advances from the state of a beggar asking for protection to that of a bestower of praises. Since he is bent upon self-respect and self-exaltation, it is not surprising that among the selfish utilitarianisms of the fear-religion he should have seized upon awe and the sublime as redeemers of his religious nature.

However important to religion disinterestedness and the sense of kinship with greatness may be, awe and the sense of the sublime render religion a still greater service by bringing to the mind ideas of superhuman agents, of gods, or of God. Majestic greatness favors a religious rather than a scientific solution of the question of origins; for it suggests an explanation by reference to unseen, personal beings as agents. In reflective, non-emotional moments one might refer natural phenomena to physical forces, while when under the influence of instinctive, emotional reactions, one might interpret the same events in the traditional anthropopathic manner necessary to the historical forms of religion. Emotions absorb attention, arrest the stream of thought, and thus for the moment limit the intellectual range. Even those who have formed in youth the habit of looking upon nature as a mechanism may, when awed or frightened, relapse into an animistic conception. There are persons who in a forest or in a tempest "feel the divine" within them; "something in the stars of the night reaches out" to them. In this way the ever-present animistic tendency crops out and bids us dispense with rational proofs of the existence of God.¹⁹ Any experience awakening a strong emotion is likely to shake off the unstable accretions of rational intelligence, to throw us back upon primitive tendencies, and thus resuscitate ghosts, spirits, and gods. This discrepancy between the god-

¹⁹ Compare William James on the sense of presence, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 58 ff.

ward tendency of our thoughts in certain emotional seizures and their direction when under the guidance of experience indicates on the one hand the progress made by the individual since he discarded animism, and on the other hand the tenacity of the mental habits rooted in a distant past.

When questioned concerning the emotions most conducive to religion, our Protestant contemporaries rarely forget to mention awe and the sense of the sublime. For one who names fear, there are hundreds who single out awe the sense of the sublime, and of the beautiful as potent sources of religious moods and activities.²⁰ The following selections will illustrate this influence:—

“Mid-ocean, lightning, and thunder inspire me with awe and the sense of dependence and turn my feelings toward God.” (No. 8.)

“I can never look up at the stars at night but adoring love and worship fills my soul. The same at early dawn when the beautiful new day comes straight from the hand of God.” (No. 39.)

“Formerly it was chiefly a sense of awe and adoration which accompanied religious worship.” (No. 51.)

“Places in which the sense of the sublime is appealed to always call forth religious emotions. I have felt this in grand old cathedrals. The last time I noticed the feeling was at the sight of Niagara Falls about two years ago. I had to restrain myself from kneeling down when I first came near the Falls. This feeling was entirely natural, as I had not looked forward to anything but a pleasant admiration of the scene, . . . but am I right in calling this a religious feeling?” (“Quebec.”)

²⁰ Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth?

.

Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven beneath the keen full moon?

.

God! Let the torrents, like a shout of nations,

Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!

God, sing ye meadow streams with gladsome voice!

.

And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,

And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!

Coleridge, Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni.

No. 51, who is frequently moved to awe by nature and also by the works of man, writes further: "The same religious feeling I experienced when meditating upon the massiveness of the Brooklyn bridge, and again when I behold such steamships as the St. Paul, Touraine, etc."

No. 37 writes: "I prefer a religious service of much formalism. I have no religious feelings in public except as I am surrounded by the noble in architecture, in colored glass, in the pageantry of the Church. I have knelt at some shrine in walking through the country abroad, with religious feelings, and I have done likewise in some altar in a cathedral. I prefer the Romish worship to any other on this account, but I refrain from having anything to do with it because I think it dangerous to liberty."

Even those who declare themselves without religion often call awe a religious emotion. (For instance, Nos. 51 and 37, quoted above.) Why should they do so unless it be that awe brings to their minds discarded ideas of a Power which, if they believed in him, would be their God?

If the data I have collected show clearly that in Protestant communities men have, as a whole, set their faces away from the dreadful and towards the desirable in religion, they indicate further that the stage of culture at which awe can be the dominant religious emotion is also past. I imagine that the worshippers of Odin and Thor were swayed more by awe than by any other emotion. The Christianity of past centuries knew no better ally, after fear, than awe. But now the awful, as well as the fearful, is losing its power. To be sure, these emotions still retain much of their original power in large portions of the Christian world. The Roman church, for instance, is not ready to dismiss so efficient an agent. Vast cathedrals, majestic music, mysterious rites, gorgeous pageantry, still entrance the faithful, impress the thoughtless, and draw to its spectacles even those indifferent to religion. The terrible they have for the most part outgrown; the awful they have not passed; and the sublime they are using as effectively as possible. In Protestant worship, and especially in the United States, it is somewhat different. Yahveh, who was wont to thunder on the summit of Mount Sinai, in

the presence of whom Moses himself could hardly live, is being displaced by the God of love, before whom not even prodigal sons need tremble. The "new" revelation is a gospel of love: "Children, flowers, fruit-trees,—everything is full of God's love" (No. 39). In church architecture, the comfortable is put before the majestic; in doctrine, the serviceable is preferred to the mysterious; and in the conception of God, the loving is not to be overshadowed by the awful.

The tendency to banish awe as well as fear is evident not only in religion, but in secular life also. The rod is proscribed in home and school; the child is no longer to sit at the feet of the master, but pupil and teacher are to work arm in arm as becomes good friends; sin is either weakness or disease, and should be met with sympathetic tenderness. Nothing is worth while except sympathy, charity, love, and their companions, trust, hope, courage, fortitude. The positive reactions are being selected because of their superior efficiency for the conditions of civilized life.²¹

²¹ A study of the origin, function, and future of religion will be found in the author's book, *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Macmillan, 1912.